



BOGNOR REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

Adopted by the Council at its Meeting held on 7th November 2016

Introduction

This Council is committed to using the most appropriate channels of communications to reach our wide variety of customers and stakeholders including residents, employees, schools, businesses, community partners and all levels of government.

The most effective communication happens when the message being sent is interpreted by the recipient in the way intended by the sender. Good Communication is therefore a two-way process. So it's not enough to talk, the Town Council have to listen. We will therefore regularly listen, review and check that our communications are being understood by our community.

This strategy is a blueprint upon which the Council will develop a practical action plan to ensure the community is heard and understood and hears and understands the Council, particularly relating to the Councils Vision and its Corporate Strategy. It will give direction to all media, online, internal, marketing, publications and public relations communications activity undertaken on behalf of Bognor Regis Town Council.

Through this strategy the Council aims to:

- Inform residents, businesses and visitors to the Town about the work of the council, the services it provides and how they can get involved in shaping decisions.
- Maintain a strong and recognisable Council so that there is no misunderstanding about the council's responsibilities and services; and so that people can consistently be involved in our vision and plans for the future.
- Promote and uphold Bognor Regis Town Council's reputation.
- Ensure that our workforce is involved and engaged in the work of the Council through good internal communications, so that they can represent and champion the Council in the community.

Across these aims we will make sure our communications are relevant and appropriate. To do this we will look at new ways that will make it even easier to engage with the Council and find key information about Council services.

Aims, Vision and Values

Our ultimate aim is that all staff, residents, partners and everyone who deals with the Council will have a clear understanding and a positive perception of our vision, aims, values, services and achievements, leading to higher levels of satisfaction and engagement with the Council.

To realise its vision, the Council will influence a wide range of organisations, individuals and partners in a cohesive and co-ordinated way.

It will therefore:

- make the Council's decisions and intentions easy to understand and respond to.
- co-ordinate and direct communications so that all parts of the Council are working towards shared objectives, in support of the vision.
- ensure that everyone understands what we're working towards and what the outcomes will be – showing people what success looks like
- ensure staff and partners understand their contribution through clear objectives, milestones and deadlines
- make sure people know the outcome of the changes the Council makes
- make people feel better informed, proud to live in Bognor Regis proud to work for the Council, and proud to work with it.

Organisational Brand

The Council's brand makes a significant difference to the effectiveness of communication and must be taken into account (both positive and negative perceptions) when delivering the message.

Simply put, the brand is the Council's promise to its community. It tells them what they can expect from our services. Our brand is derived from who we are, who we want to be and who people perceive us to be.

An important feature of any brand is its visual appearance and the Council currently uses both a Coat of Arms or Crest and the sunshine logo to promote their identity within the community.

However there is another element to the brand which is made up of the following components.

- Our overall purpose - what are we here for?
- Our values - what drives us to do the things we do?
- Our key messages - what are we saying about what we intend to offer?
- Our service delivery - what do we provide, compared with what we promise?

Defining The Bognor Regis Town Brand

Our overall purpose

Our purpose is to lead Bognor Regis to a better future improving the quality of life for locals, listening to and acting upon their views to improve facilities for residents and visitors and delivering bespoke value for money services.

Our Vision

Our vision is to develop a clear Bognor Regis brand to become more powerful and enterprising, controlling our own destiny so that we can deliver relevant and sustainable local services, develop community cohesion and create a happier Bognor Regis.

Our values - what drives us to do the things we do?

- To serve the community.
- To provide the services local people reasonably want and which are value for money.
- To develop a sense of community.
- To provide a voice for the community.

Innovation in Community Development

Key internal organisational messages (what are we saying about what we are working hard to offer within the operation of Council services)

The Councils corporate strategy sets out what the Council is striving to achieve including 4 priorities.

Priority 1 - Promoting the Bognor Regis Brand and Town Area

We will identify a clear brand for Bognor Regis which reflects our core purpose to create an image that identifies the uniqueness of the Council's services and differentiates it from other Councils' services, so that over time this image becomes associated with our community promise, leading to increased credibility, quality and satisfaction in the mind of everyone who comes into contact with the Bognor Regis Town Council.

Priority 2 - Partnership Working, Community Engagement and Empowerment.

Bognor Town Council realise that they can't deliver the vision in isolation and better results will be obtained through partnership working.

Priority 3 - Take on more devolved services.

The Town Council believes that, to lead Bognor Regis to a better future and improve the quality of life for locals, listening to and acting upon their views to improve facilities for residents and visitors and delivering bespoke value for money services then managing and delivering services at a local level, will improve the effectiveness and efficiency of these services delivering better value for money for local residents.

Priority 4 - Acquiring and creating more community assets.

The Council will strive to acquire and develop more community assets as it believes that the acquisition of more Community Assets is desirable to not only ensure future provision of facilities and services but to also provide a new source of income for future years so as to reduce the reliance on the Precept.

Our service delivery promise

In achieving our vision Bognor Regis Town Council promises to be trustworthy, honest, reliable and accessible. We will have a clear identity and the authority to take ownership of community problems and issues, ensuring it does a good job for all.

Our Audiences

The Town Council is responsible for the delivery of a wide range of services. Delivery of these services, strategic vision and future plans can have different impacts on groups, organisations and people across the Town.

The target audience of any communication, therefore, may vary depending on the particular information being communicated.

Our key audiences include:

- Bognor Regis Town Council residents and prospective residents
- Those working-in and visiting the Town
- Specific groups or communities, including people including ethnic minority communities, older, young and disabled people and vulnerable and socially excluded group
- Businesses in Bognor Regis and those who may relocate or invest here
- Voluntary organisations and groups
- Stakeholders and partners, including Arun District Council and West Sussex County Council.
- Central Government and Government offices
- The local, regional and trade media (press, radio and television)
- Town Councillors and Council employees

Current Communication Channels

In order that communities know about the services that we offer and for us to ensure that those services meet - and continue to meet - the needs of local people, we need to adopt a proactive approach to communication and keep under constant review the means by which we communicate.

The Council employs a range of different communication media. Currently, the principal means of communication are:

Printed media:

- **Press Statements, Media Releases and Features.**

Council staff run a press office function, producing proactive releases and responses to media enquiries, both Nationally and locally (as appropriate) to promote Bognor Regis as a visitor destination and publicise Council services, events, decisions and performance.

The press team also create banners and posters to promote the functions and events organised by the Town Council.

- **Service Information**

These include leaflets about Council services and procedures, strategy and consultation documents, as well as newsletters targeted at specific groups or service users.

The Town Guide is published annually and lists all events in the Town during the year, both Town Council organised events and those of other organisations. The Guide also includes a Town Centre map with details of places to eat and does incorporate a limited amount of advertising such as for the Picturedrome Cinema and the Regis Centre theatre.

Broadcast media:

- **Arranging Television and Radio Interviews**

These are arranged on request from the local media.

Social media:

The Town Council acknowledges the growing popularity and importance of Social Media when connecting with the Community and will therefore use all current and emerging social media platforms to effectively promote Bognor Regis as a visitor destination and to publicise Council services, events, decisions and performance.

- **Website**

The Council's website – www.bognorregis.gov.uk – contains information on the Council and its services as well as latest news and events. The website is also where we post details of Council meetings, agendas and papers.

- **Facebook**

The Council operate a Facebook page where Council events and other activities are promoted.

- **Twitter**

The Council has a twitter feed allowing immediate promotion of Council activities and events.

Internal Communications:

Through our internal communications we aim to ensure that staff and Councillors are informed, involved and engaged in achieving the Council's objectives. Our internal communication comprises:

- Corporate communications about issues that affect Council staff as a whole.
- Information about the wider work of the Council, including the reasons behind strategy and policy decisions, and progress on our key objectives.
- Service specific communications designed to ensure that staff working in a particular service area have the information they need to do their jobs effectively.

We use a variety of mechanisms for internal communication;

Electronic:

Bognor Regis Town Council use the internet to communicate information and briefings to both staff and councillors.

Face-to-Face:

- **Staff briefings**

Staff briefings and are held by members of the management team and take place on an ad-hoc basis as part of specific corporate projects.

Communications Action Plan

Our communications aims are ;

- Inform residents, businesses and visitors to the Town about the work of the Council, the services it provides and how they can get involved in shaping decisions.
- Maintain a strong and recognisable Council brand.
- Promote and uphold Bognor Regis Town Council's reputation.
- Ensure that our workforce is involved and engaged in the work of the Council through good internal communications, so that they can represent and champion the Council in the community.

Achieving these aims will require:

- Communication to be seen as a strategic part of the planning and management processes.
- All service areas to think about the messages they need to communicate and the opportunities to showcase success and good practice.
- All employees to see that they have a role to play in communication – effective communication is not the preserve of the Town Clerk.
- Methods and channels of communication to be reviewed regularly to ensure that communications reach their target audiences and that communications channels are cost effective so that an appropriate approach and focus can be taken. The website and internal emails should play a fundamental role and appropriate alternative or new methods should always be considered - particularly developments in the area of electronic technology.
- Messages to be consistent across the whole of the authority.

Communication Strategy Aims and Action Plan

AIM 1

Inform residents, businesses, visitors, partners and stakeholders about the work of the council, the services it provides and how they can get involved in shaping decisions.

Actions Required

1. Establish database of stakeholders in the Town
2. Ensure Councillors report back to Council on meetings attended
3. Obtain clarity on user groups and their status
4. Encourage groups to present updates at Council meetings
5. Investigate the additional potential for tapping into social media, including video streaming, blogs and podcasts.
6. Provide an email service for residents so that they can be contacted with accurate and timely updates on issues.
7. Place article in local paper week before meetings, giving details of items for discussion and inviting public to attend

AIM 2

Maintain a strong and recognisable Council identity.

Actions Required

1. Develop and roll out the Council's brand and corporate identity.
2. Ensure that the Council identity is consistently used in all public facing communications.
3. Raise profile of all Councillors
4. Run Councillor surgeries
5. Ensure press coverage of Mayoral and Civic activities
6. Ensure all sections of the Council are aware of the Corporate Identity Guidelines and how to use them.
7. Work with partner organisations to ensure correct and appropriate use of the Council's identity.

AIM 3

Promote and uphold Bognor Regis Town Council's reputation.

Actions Required

1. Ensure that all Council communications recognise the role of the Mayor, Chairmen and Councillors in order to promote understanding of the democratic process.
2. Identify media opportunities to promote the Council and its services to local residents.
3. Engage with local and regional media to identify and contribute to emerging issues ensuring all staff are aware of the Corporate Identity Guidelines and how to use them.
4. Deal with all media enquiries promptly, clearly and accurately.
5. Investigate new ways in which the Council can provide information to residents and stakeholders and identify easier ways for them to interact with the Council.

AIM 4

Ensure that our workforce is involved and engaged in the work of the Council through good internal communications, so that they can represent and champion the Council in the community.

Actions Required

1. Run poster campaigns when appropriate to promote issues and events.
2. Implement "all-staff" bulletins and section-specific newsletters.
3. Establish effective information flows between Council sections and Council managers.
4. Work with staff to ensure communications are focused on corporate messages across the organisation, helping staff to become ambassadors of the Council sharing the Council's key messages with communities across the Town.

5. Utilise technology throughout the Council to develop an effective dialogue to include staff, members and senior management.
6. Seek national recognition for staff communication and management through achievement of Investors in People award.

Evaluation and Amendment

The future success of the Councils communication strategy community centre lies with providing its customers with services that they want, delivered in a way that they want them. The effectiveness of the communications with the community must therefore be reviewed through a communication audit using open questioning to include the following.

- What do you read/see/hear?
- What works/doesn't work?
- What do you want to see more of?
- What information do you need that you are not currently supplied with?
- How often do you want us to communicate with you?